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A MODERN EXPERIENCE

FANNY BECKWITH CLARK

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CLEVELAND
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A MODERN EXPERIENCE.

I.

CHANGED FORTUNES.

"DELIGHTED to see you, Carl—but what a face! Out with it, for if it is 'hard times' just laugh it off, because that is a trouble of the jolliest sort. Talk about misery loving company! It has enough company these days to hold balls and receptions every hour of the day."

"*You* can joke about it, Henry, but it is quite different with me. Imagine yourself a married man and losing everything excepting the love of the loveliest and the most devoted of women! You bachelors aren't 'in it' with us. *You* don't know what grief, loss of self-respect and cruel humiliation is, until you are forced to confess to the woman you love and have

married and have pledged, 'I thee endow with all my worldly possessions,' that your business has gone to the wall for lack of cool judgment and nerve as well as capital. Oh, the pity of it! I tell you, Henry, Alice will be brave and try to make the best of it, but at the same time she will have her private opinion of me as a man. Then, too, suppose she does not care to give up her servants and all our expensive pleasures. You know she has a magnificent voice and never had an opportunity to cultivate it until I married her. She has lately been studying and enjoying it so much. I never have allowed her to sing in public, however, because I have always been so selfish and jealous."

"I thought she had had advantages, Carl—she certainly has an excellent education."

"Yes, she has, through the kind generosity of an uncle now dead, but no artistic education. She is only twenty-two,

so there is still time for that. Oh, Henry, think of it! should I have to suggest denying her anything I would surely die of mortification."

"Look here, Carl, my boy, all I can say is that I am glad I am not 'in it' with you, but as you ask my advice, it is this, that you confess to her right away, and the sooner over the better. We might guess until doomsday and still not divine her decision, the proud, eccentric Alice, who is so droll and emotional and never two days the same. Oh no, my boy, I do not envy you; but just 'brace up' and inform me in the morning as to what she herself proposes for you to do under these trying circumstances, for it will be rare, I am sure. By-the-by, Carl, how did you get into such a mess? I can't understand it."

"I signed a friend's note; made poor investments; then I mortgaged my home to save my business, and now all is gone,

and beside all this, Henry, I dabbled in wheat, through the advice of men who had dealt in it so long and thought it a sure thing. This confession is the hardest for me to make, as Alice hates and has always opposed speculation of that sort. However, I really feel that I could, within a year's time, retrieve my fortune if I had an opportunity to go West, where I have mining interests; although they never have been lucrative, they promise to be so before long. But I can't leave my wife. She was, you remember, an orphan; neither can I send her to my father's, for she is too eccentric to live with them. Her notions would startle the old folks. Besides, I am too proud to tell them of my ill luck. Please, Henry, help me think and turn your thoughts into language, for I can't see the slightest ray of light through this great dilemma which I seem to be in."

"Language, Carl, some one says, 'is

arbitrary convention and only the emotional elements at the bottom are real.' So to help you think and plan is what I shall try to do. How glad I would be if I were able to give you some tangible help.''

"I appreciate your good-will, Henry, and good-bye until to-morrow. I will then inform you of Alice's advice, for I think a woman's intuition proves oftentimes a valuable guide.''

II.

AT HOME.

"I am glad that you came home early, Carl. I have been wishing for you. This day has been long and tiresome and you always rest me, dear."

"You don't look tired, dearest, and it seems to me that you never were as pretty and attractive as you are to-night. You know that I love you and thank God that you are my very own. How blest a man is, and how thankful he should be, to really possess the woman he loves! Do you know, Alice, that many, many married couples either exist with heavy hearts or are perfectly indifferent to each other. And yet we talk about 'What God hath joined together, etc.'! I think He has less to do with our marriage customs than do the laws of the land."

"Yes, Carl, I agree with you, and what misery it must be to realize that one is tied for life to one whom you do not love! Of course, this realization must come on by degrees, and slow stages, a life torture. I always was in favor of capital punishment, for I am sure life imprisonment can not be preferable."

"No one can think this of us, Alice, for you alone occupy my heart and I am so sure of it, just as sure as that I live."

"Carl, dear, what is it? Have you a confession? You are, to be sure, always kind and loving, but this is such sweet love-making, so tender and full of admiration, that I am suspicious that it is acting as a balm to a troubled heart or a verbal tonic to the confession which is to follow."

"Yes, Alice, I have a confession to make—"

"Say there is no woman in it, or I'll have a nervous chill."

"No, no, my sweetheart, there *is* no other woman. You are, always have been, and will be forever, my only love. I have been very busy to-day and exceedingly worried, and by the way, Alice, if you were in the place of a woman whose husband had made great mistakes and finally he were to confess and ask forgiveness, what would you say?"

"In the first place, Carl, if I am to pretend to be some one else, let me feign to be both. If I were a man and asked forgiveness of the woman whom I loved I would *not* say, 'Will you forgive me, my own darling, for I love you and will do better,' but I would say, as did Hester Prynne, 'Thou *shalt* forgive me. Let God punish!' *Thou* shalt forgive, for you know a man who really loves can stand the frown of the world and even of Heaven, but he cannot bear her frown and live."

"That sounds like my loyal Alice, but

you have only told half. How about *her* reply?''

"You know I am a little prejudiced in favor of my sex, therefore I may not be so broad as you might like. I would assure him of my love and sympathy and that I would forgive him anything, even before he confessed it, excepting—an affair with another woman.''

"Then I know I am forgiven, dearheart, for losing every dollar I possessed. The note we signed had to be met, our mortgage paid and my investments have proven——''

"Don't pain yourself with a detailed explanation, my Carl. I forgive it all, knowing that you acted as you supposed would prove to be best and right. This state of affairs is indeed terrible, but others, much older, have been obliged to begin again and we too must. We have our health and love to face it with, therefore are better equipped and more fortu-

nate than most people. What a pest money is! The love of it is not only 'the root of all evil,' but *is* the evil-one of life, for it is a great tempter, as it often leads one to do evil, since without it we cannot live. The loss of it deprives one of happiness, for money is the nucleus of a happy home."

"Yes, Alice, one's whole life is devoted to the striving after the almighty dollar. Everything depends upon it. If a man love his wife they are happy and contented so long as they have it. To love her and lose his money is misery of the worst kind, for the remorse causes his heart to ache and makes him covet wealth for her comfort. If he does not love her and has means, they are at least comfortable, although unhappy, and he has the satisfaction of generously providing and keeping up appearances, even if they each go their own way. So you see *all* depends upon money."

"Argue it as we may, Carl, dear, something in our case must be done quickly and the best plan is for you to go West—"

"How can I go and leave you alone, dearest?"

"Don't worry about that. I have a little money in the bank, enough to defray your expenses and to keep me until you can send me something. By the way, dear, let me consult the woman Jennie told us of, the one who claims to be a medium and has done such wonders. You know, I have been curious to interview her ever since she told Jennie where to find her lost ring and this is a good excuse for talking with her."

"It seems a foolish thing to do, Alice, but go if you like, for we may as well follow some one's advice."

"I shall do just as she advises, for things can't be any worse."

"Even to joining my people, Alice? I

really think you would make an exception of such advice.''

"Yes, I'll even promise to do that, if she thinks it best—''

"If you are so ready to take her advice, we will both promise to follow her instructions.''

III.

ONE YEAR LATER.

"OH, how tired I am! My head is fairly buzzing and this past year seems a century! Let me see! I took the fortune-teller's advice, packed up my things and left Carl, 'without the pangs of parting,' leaving him to seek *our* fortune and *I* to earn my own living until he is successful, then he is to put into the press 'Fortune found,' and I am to go back to him, and until then he is not to know of my whereabouts. Why did I come to this big city where every one is so cold and unsympathetic? Men are so thoughtless! They should consider temperaments and judge accordingly. Any one can see that I am all '*emotion!*' My thoughts and imagination grow to enormous proportions and end in one over-

powering *emotion*. Men should make allowances for such temperaments. I am treated as if I had *always* been in a Telephone Exchange, and it just occurs to me, how does any one *know* that I haven't? People have so little forethought. If the manager would be kind enough to interview me in private, and not for example's sake reprimand me before the others, it would be less humiliating. At the same time he assures me that with better judgment, which he is positive I can cultivate, I will soon make a good operator. Yet, it is for what I thought to be excellent judgment that he reprimands me. I can't help listening to some of the messages, as it is such a new thing. I only did the kind, and in my best discrimination, the right thing, when that man 'phoned his wife and scolded her for not meeting him down town at a certain time,—said he 'waited two hours and had gone without his lunch.' I *knew* he was in a rage

and would be more calm by night, so I just turned off her end of the 'phone, to save the wear and tear upon her nerves, as I knew by the tremor of her voice when she first answered him that she was not at all to blame, for a woman certainly is *not* to blame for anything that she has entirely *forgotten*. I have often tried and found it utterly impossible to recall things that have passed from my mind. Of course the gentleman was furious with me and wanted me discharged, but he will forgive me, I am sure, when he finds out that I was only trying to prevent a family quarrel, for that is quite in my line and is my especial care just now. The rule is for us to use judgment and when we think parties have talked a sufficient time, to turn off, and I was sure that *he* had. Subservience to formal rule is often a means but not always an end in itself. I wish men would 'phone their wives less often, any way, for it

must be very distracting to both business-men and house-keepers! I am not envious, but, Oh dear, I wish I could get even a scolding from my Carl over the 'phone —I guess I feel better now. I knew this terrible headache would bring tears. There goes that noise overhead again. I must investigate. Betty!"

"Can I do anything for you, Mrs. Carl?

"Yes, Betty, tell me what this noise is overhead? It is the same thing every *night* and some times nearly *all night*. I have terrible dreams in consequence and last *night* a regular night-mare,"

"Oh, that is only Mr. Bascom, a roomer. He has a great head for invention. He has something about completed and I heard him say that he has to grasp the still hours of the night, as his brain needs 'solitude.'"

"Even so, Betty, he doesn't have to grasp the still hours with his legs and he never keeps *them* still. It's tramp,

tramp, tramp all night! You might suggest to him, Betty, that the solitude his brain needs would be more complete and everything in better harmony if he would govern his pedal extremities."

"Indeed I will, Mrs. Carl, and I'll see him soon."

"Poor man! How worried he is! It may be that his all depends upon the invention and possibly he has a wife and children and perhaps they have all run away from him! That would be excuse enough for any man to tramp nights,—indeed I would be the last to criticise his passing out of the condition of a man altogether into a tramp personified. I simply can't sleep with my brain and whole physical anatomy making a medley of themselves. The annoyance of this day upon my mind, love of Carl in my heart, and this tramp, tramp ever in my ears, is unbearable! Guess I'll tap upon the gas-pipe and let him *know* that

I am perturbed. What does the man mean, answering my taps in that way? Does he think that I am calling for help? Men haven't the least intuition. Any woman would know at once just what I mean.''

'' Come in, Betty!''

'' I was called to Mr. Bascom's room, just now, and I told him all that I could remember of your message about harmony and pedals and he said to tell the lady that he is neither a musician nor a composer, only a simple inventor, with the highest aim in life; that he is sorry, indeed, to be of so much annoyance, but he is obliged to be up at night, and as he had already made up his mind that you were insane he had not pretended to give you any consideration. While working at his machine, he said every time the metal would rattle, you would call out 'number?' And carry on an animated conversation. Now that I have assured

him that you are a perfectly sensible woman, he promises to be more careful and thoughtful.''

'' How terrible, Betty! I said nothing about his being a musician. I know I am extremely nervous and if I should explain the complicated causes for it, he would be all the more certain that I am *not* in my right mind. You are positive that you convinced him that I am all right?''

'' Yes, indeed, I did, Mrs. Carl. I think too much of you to let him think anything wrong, so I fixed it all right for you and told him that *every* one considers you odd.''

'' Well, Betty, I know you mean well, but even *that* is not very consoling.''

'' Oh, yes, Mrs. Carl, Mr. Bascom said that he thought that you had either never boarded before, or had done so so long that you had become a chronic kicker; then he said that he had decided that all

elderly women, especially those who had lived alone very long, were inclined that way.''

"What reply did you make, Betty?''

"I said nothing and came away.''

"Very well, we will let him think that I am old. Good night, Betty. Now don't say anything more about me.''

"All right, Mrs. Carl, I won't say a word.''

"Good night!'' "Good night!''

"How humiliating to be all alone and considered old and insane! I would have been much happier to have gone upon the stage, and would have done so had I not respected the prejudice Carl always had for such a life. I don't hear a word of him. Surely he could not make a fortune in a year's time, but suppose I should *not* hear and remain away and he should obtain a divorce on the grounds of desertion. Oh, horrors!''

IV.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES MEET.—"A CONFIDENTIAL TALK."

"ISN'T it strange that I should meet you, Grace, in this great city, and how fortunate for me, as I need someone in whom I can confide."

"I am glad to be of comfort to you, Alice, dear, and so glad that you consented to call upon me this evening. We have only lived in Chicago two years and I have often wondered concerning your whereabouts. One never forgets their childhood friends, they always seem dear. What a strange and disagreeable experience you are having and I am so sorry! I told Mr. Nelson of it and you have his sincere sympathy too. I am sorry that he is not here to meet you but he has gone out of town to attend the races.

Horses are his especial delight and diversion.''

"I regret not seeing him and I hope to meet him soon. I understand how taken up a man can be with 'a hobby' and a man without one, Balzac says, 'has never grasped the possibilities of life.' It is strange, too, that you have never met Carl, although I think friends in a boarding-school seldom meet in their respective homes.''

"How did you happen to drop your last name and call yourself Mrs. Carl, Alice?''

"Easy enough, Grace, for when I skipped to parts unknown it was necessary to change my name and I thought it would be a comfort to hear Carl's name so often and indeed it has been the only sweetness my life has known this past year.''

"By the way, Alice, what became of the man who was the means of Carl's ruin, the person for whom Carl signed the note?''

"He is ill, poor man, and so regrets our misfortune. He is helpless, too, to do anything, but his appreciation of Carl's kindness is refreshing indeed. I do not regret signing the note."

"How can you say that, Alice, when so much unhappiness has come to you through it?"

"Grace, dear, don't you remember what Shakespeare says of friendship? 'The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.' I think it is even possible to carry friendship on one side without the reciprocal feeling on the other. Be true to thyself and never betray a *friend.* The two men were such and he had been a great comfort to Carl in his college days, during many trials and through a long illness; so when the time came to offer him assistance, Carl and I both were ready and willing to do so and I am not sorry. What are we

here for if not to do a little good in the world? Because one himself suffers for others' benefit, is the good itself less sweet? For my part, I would not injure one of my friend's feelings for any amount of money, and as for friendships broken on account of financial trouble, those people are too shallow and infinitesimal to be considered. The heart of a true *friend* will endure trials and trials again for another. It has often seemed to me that some of these heart-strings lead to the conscience and bind us fast, and the more they are played upon the stronger and more fixed become their principles, past the comprehension of many, but so well understood by one's true self."

"You were always so analytical, Alice. I remember, even in school, you had the reputation of continually wanting to know the whys and wherefores and puzzling your head trying to define people's mo-

tives, and the consequence was that you were kept in deep thought. Your sad life when a girl, of course, had much to do with it, for you had less encouragement from home than any of the other girls and you seemed to feel the want of it, and that is one reason, dear, that we all petted you and tried to think of you first.''

'' I appreciated it all and tacitly understood the sweet thoughtfulness. Did you ever feel lonely, Grace, in the fullest sense of the word?''

'' No, I don't think I really have.''

''*I* was born so--now don't smile—I *was*, dear, born lonely. Left an orphan and taken into my uncle's family. I was given care, my wants were supplied, an education was added,—in fact, everything that a young lady needs, excepting *the* thing that she needs most—*love*. I do not hesitate to say that I had naturally fully as much brain as the rest of the

family, yet never was I told that I had done anything well; the others were encouraged, but I, never. Unfortunately, I was born with a warm, sympathetic nature, one capable of deep, true love, therefore capable of deep suffering. Why could I not have had a cold, stoic nature, which usually assures one of much more contentment?"

"We are as we are, Alice, dear. Those traits are inborn and we cannot change them. People who are cold and indifferent are naturally so. It is true, too, in the vegetable kingdom, for you can cleanse a potato, cut away the bad parts, put it over the fire and boil it, and still it is what it first was — a vegetable. No doubt you have had many heart-aches with your extremely sensitive nature, but you have much to be thankful for in your happy marriage."

"Yes, indeed, it compensates for all. Carl is the only person I have ever loved

and naturally I feel this separation deeply.''

"I wish I could make your burden lighter. It will come out well, I know it will. Do try to take a little more pleasure and don't worry so, dear. Is the work at the 'Phone Exchange too enervating for you?''

"Oh, no; I enjoy it, for it keeps me occupied. I could, of course, have done much better with music, but purposely avoided the publicity of such life.''

"I told you, Alice, of my reception next week, and I insist upon your coming and I also insist upon your singing for us. It will do you good to meet people and I shall send my carriage for you promptly at eight o'clock.''

"Did you ever feel your head rebelling at the thought and your heart aching to do a thing? It is such a temptation, for you know I used to enjoy society and I love to sing.''

"Then do as your heart dictates and I'll assure you of a pleasant evening. You must send me the titles of two songs at least, for I know your rich voice will be much appreciated."

"Well, I'll promise to come, Grace, if you will agree to send me home as early as I wish, for I have not been in company without Carl for so long a time that I shall be lonely in the midst of the gaiety."

"All right, dear, as you wish. I forgot to mention that we give this reception that our friends may meet Mr. Bascom, the inventor, but you will receive our cards to-morrow and they explain themselves."

"That name is very familiar, where does he live?"

"Oh, Tom meets him at the Club. He has a room somewhere and he is making a hermit of himself until the invention is completed. It has to do with some ma-

chinery that Tom is interested in, so he has often brought him home to dine with us and he is a highly cultivated and polished gentleman. He has been eleven months perfecting the invention and from the sales of his patents will make an immense fortune.''

Alice, somewhat surprised and disconcerted by the revelation and the prospective embarrassment she might feel, deemed silence the best course.

'' I guess I won't tell her that his room is over mine and that we already have agreed to disagree, anyway so long as he considers me 'old.' He won't recognize me as the 'chronic kicker.' ''

'' I ask you especially to come early, Alice, as we are to begin our musicale before Mr. Bascom arrives, as he has some objections to music, of which we did not learn until our cards for a reception and musicale were printed.''

'' I don't think I shall like him if he ob-

jects to music. As Luther says, 'Those who are not touched by music, I hold to be like stocks and stones.' If he is a successful inventor it seems to me he ought to love music, for invention requires so much thought. Music is said to be the 'language of the emotions,' and emotion is the very breath and life-blood of thought. What *power* can any thought have without emotion?''

'' Oh, don't misunderstand me, for Mr. Bascom is passionately fond of music, but singing recalls to him some occasion or incident in his life which, as he says, 'is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh,' and he feels so keenly his sorrow that he has not the moral courage to hear the human voice in song. Of course we have asked no questions, but I have thought many times that probably he had a sweetheart, who is long since dead. Tom has planned to introduce him to Miss Nash, a charming and vivacious young lady of

twenty and he is quite sure she will interest him.''

'' Indeed, I can sympathize with him in his loneliness, Grace, for sometimes I feel crushed. It is getting late and I'll say good-night. I have had a happy evening, dear, and will be on hand next week.''

''My carriage is ready to take you home. Good night! Now don't forget the songs.''

V.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE RECEPTION.

"DID you ring, Mrs. Carl?"

"Yes, Betty, I am exceedingly nervous to-night and I am going to sing for a friend to-morrow night, and although Mr. Bascom has been very quiet of late I wish you would kindly tell him that the 'elderly lady' in the room below has a severe attack of nostalgia and would very much appreciate his being particularly quiet to-night, as she is to pass through quite an enervating ordeal, for one of her age, to-morrow, and needs all the rest and strength possible."

"I will, indeed, Mrs. Carl."

The door had scarcely closed upon the faithful Betty till visions of the reception and the songs and—and—some one else filled Mrs. Carl's thoughts.

"I hope my dress will be a success, as I have spent all that I have saved to be able to appear as well as I know Grace would wish, for she is very kind to ask me to take so conspicuous a part. I chose all white because Carl used to admire me most in that and I shall wear my diamond star in my hair, the only piece that I have saved from our wreck. How well I recall my handsome lover-husband as he presented it to me as a birthday gift. '*You* are my star,' he said as he placed it in my hair and 'these stones are like you —pure and bright. I purchased it because it reminded me of you. Stars always remind me of you,' and as I smiled he said, 'Don't laugh, my love, I am *Sirius*.' How clever I thought that was and how proud I was of him—and of the star! So like the old philosopher, who said that 'he could resist anything but temptation,' I kissed him."

Ere her reverie was finished, Betty again presented herself.

"Mr. Bascom says that he 'will be glad to accommodate you, as he feels particularly tender toward old ladies, for his own dear mother is still living and if he can in any way lighten or brighten your life he would be most happy to do so.' I nearly laughed, Mrs. Carl, for I just wished he could see your young, beautiful, sad face."

"Thank you, Betty, but I do not feel nearly as young as I look. Betty, do you believe in a God?"

"Sure, Mrs. Carl! I could not go about my work with a steady hand, without faith in my heart."

"Do you believe in a real, personal God?"

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Carl."

"Then will you do something for me?"

"Certainly, anything in my power, for you are always so kind to me. You treat me as if I had a right to live, and some

of the other boarders don't. What *can I* do for you, Mrs. Carl?"

"You can pray for me, Betty."

"Why and what for? You now appear to me more of an angel than a mortal."

"No, no, Betty, don't say that, for I have not prayed for a year; I seem to be afraid to do so, for such a fear comes over me. You pray to your God for me and ask Him in His great goodness and mercy to watch over and especially to guide me, to strengthen my heart, for it seems to me as if it were on such distant terms with my soul."

"Indeed I will, Mrs. Carl, and for fear I'll get the message all wrong, as I did the first one you sent to Mr. Bascom about the pedals, you, too, just utter a prayer for yourself and see how easy it is and how comfortable you feel afterward."

"I'll try. Good night, Betty!"

"Good night, Mrs. Carl, and God bless you!"

VI.

THE NIGHT OF THE RECEPTION.

"IS my hair all right, Betty?"

"You look like a queen, Mrs. Carl. I never saw any one as beautiful. You must have been rich once, for you seem to look more natural all dressed up so fine."

"What have you there?"

"Something for you. After you had left this morning, Mr. Bascom gave me these flowers and said that he had visited a conservatory where they raised the rarest of them, I have forgotten what he called them, and these are the only ones of this coloring in the State and he sends them to you, hoping that you are feeling better and that they may please and cheer you, for he said his mother always liked flowers about when she felt at all lonely."

"Why, Betty, these are orchids and so

beautiful! Indeed I do appreciate his thoughtfulness.''

"You will wear them to-night, won't you? Let me fasten them on for you.''

"Yes, I'll wear them, Betty. They will relieve the dull whiteness of my gown.'' Mrs. Carl questioned herself: "Suppose Mr. Bascom sees them on me? He will probably think I am a relative of the 'elderly lady, so I'll wear them just the same.''

"I hope you will have a happy time, Mrs. Carl, and please bring some of the happiness home in your heart and face, for I often think that if your heart is as sad as your face, you must many times feel sorry for yourself.''

"I'll try. There, the flowers look very well. Hand me my music, please, and I'll go, as the carriage has been waiting some time. Good night, Betty. I thank you for your assistance and gentle encouragement.''

"Good night, Mrs. Carl. Don't thank me for anything I can do for you, for don't you see how it pleases me?"

VII.

AT THE RECEPTION.

"At first with rapture drank
The bliss of music, then with swelling heart
Felt, this was his own being's greater part."

—*George Eliot.*

THE scene at the reception is indeed a gay one. Amongst the profusion of flowers are festooned myriads of many-colored electric lights. The stage, in the white and gold ball-room, is one mass of American-beauty roses, and even the night is propitious, for the stars are bright and are blinking at one another as if in unanimous consent to add their charm to a scene which Heaven itself is to bless. In fact, "this night was made for music." The guests have arrived and are seated. The program begins. Alice feels her heart standing still amid this labyrinth of beauty.

"If Carl were only here, Grace, my happiness would be complete; yet I feel that I shall do well, for my voice is clear to-night."

"I expect you to have a perfect ovation, Alice, dear, for as Tom says, 'you are a picture.' Now is your turn and I'll slip away to the rear of the hall where I can better watch the expression of the guests."

As Alice stepped to the front of the stage, a slight applause greeted her, which is always especially encouraging to one who is a stranger amongst strangers. She sang "The Evening Star," from Tannhauser. The recitative was delivered with varied modulation and expression; first, with a quiet, weird voice. "Like death's foreboding, Twilight all surrounding," then with firm stroke, "The soul—feels terror at its flight through dread and night." Slightly raising her head, she continued, "And *thou*

appear'st, O fairest star of heaven,'' and ending with well-marked precision,'' With cheering light from the vale shows the way.'' There was a perceptible stir in the audience,—the stir of approval, which all singers love to hear, during the pause between verses. Then, as she began the Aria, she raised her head still higher and fixed her eyes way into space and sang, '' Oh, thou sublime! sweet ev'ning star.'' Her voice was rich and mellow and had that matured quality which develops with heart-suffering and greatly beautifies its timbre. An ovation *did* follow and for an encore she sang that beautiful ballad, put to music by Kate Vanderpoel:

'' Darling, darling, a bird is calling,
Over the hill and over the lea.
The sun has risen, the dew ceased falling,
Darling, come back to me.''

'' Darling, darling, the violet is weeping,
A tear deep down in its heart I see,
My lonely tryst I still am keeping,
Darling, come back to me.''

"Darling, darling, the light is gliding
In and out from tree to tree,
Trying to find where thou art hiding.
Darling, come back to me."

As she sang the next verse her heart seemed breaking, so she nerved herself anew, for she saw Grace earnestly talking with some one at the hall door.

"Darling, darling, my heart is yearning;
What is the summer bereft of thee?
Day has no dawn, the night no turning.
Darling, come back to me."

In the midst of it, Mrs. Nelson heard a step back of her in the hallway.

"Oh, I am so glad that you have arrived, Mr. Bascom. I hope you will overcome your prejudice and listen to this beautiful voice. Why, what is the matter? Are you ill?"

"Mrs. Nelson, this music is killing me; every word of that song tramples upon my heart and that voice is crushing out my very existence!"

"How sorry I am. Come with *me*, away from it, and you will soon recover."

"I can't, I am rooted to the spot, for that voice pictures to me a golden-haired, blue-eyed girl, an angel God spared from Heaven and brought to this earth, to be for a short time my happiness and then—my misery."

"You are so capable of loving, Mr. Bascom, and how terrible to have to part forever with the one you loved. You must try to cheer up. It is a duty you owe yourself, for you have made such a success of life. Look in and see her, for she, too, has golden hair."

"I do not want to see her. I don't want to break the spell."

"Well, it is all over now and I am glad for your sake. Come with me to the reception room, for the guests will soon be down to be presented to you. Your color is returning and you will soon feel quite right. Mr. Nelson wishes to intro-

duce you to a friend, a Miss Nash, whom you will find charming.''

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"Yes, Mr. Crosby, I shall be glad to promenade upon the piazza, as I am quite warm and still feel the strain, as it is so long since I have sung in company.''

"Isn't it a beautiful night, Mrs. Carl? Your nerves will soon quiet in this delightful air. The music of the orchestra is so enchanting, too, that I am sure you will soon feel quite yourself.''

"Music always seems to affiliate with everything that is beautiful. Harmony in anything seems so quieting and soothing to our natures. Don't you think so, Mr. Crosby?''

"To be frank, I'll tell you what I think, Mrs. Carl. I think you are a beautiful woman with a beautiful voice and have beautiful thoughts.''

"Now, Mr. Crosby, those remarks are

inharmonious and are, in fact, incongruous just now. By the way, have you met Mr. Bascom yet?''

"Yes, many times at the Club, and he is certainly a brilliant man.''

"I have not met him, and so soon as I am sufficiently rested would like to go in and be presented.''

"I shall be delighted to take you. There he is, over in the summer-house, with Miss Nash. I guess the Nelsons are trying to make a match. They certainly would make a handsome pair.''

"I cannot see them distinctly, but they are now coming this way.''

"They are about to pass us; shall I introduce you, Mrs. Carl?''

"No! no! Mr. Crosby; take me to the summer-house, quick! quick!''

"What is the trouble, Mrs. Carl, are you ill? That's right, send for water, she has fainted.''

"Mr. Crosby, allow *me* to assist the

lady, she is a very old acquaintance and I have just recognized her."

"Certainly, Mr. Bascom, although I prefer to remain by her myself."

"I am both obliged and proud to state, Mr. Crosby, that I am her husband, and our recognition is the cause of her swooning."

"Then, of course, I am obliged to stand back."

"Alice, Alice, my darling, open your eyes. I am here. Your devoted lover and husband."

"Carl, am I dreaming? Don't go away!"

"No, dearest, I am by you. How happy I am to have found you! How has it all happened?"

"My whole being is paralyzed with sudden happiness and I can't explain anything."

"I love you, love you, dear. Where have you kept yourself? Where did you

get these flowers you are wearing?''

"A friend of mine gave them to me.''

"Was she old and rather eccentric, dear?''

"No, she is young, just my age, and a sensitive, love-sick woman, Carl,— not 'insane' nor a 'chronic kicker.' ''

"Here is Mrs. Nelson, to enquire for you.''

"What has happened, Alice?''

"I have made a happy discovery. Mr. Bascom, the inventor, is also the possessor of my heart's love,—my Carl, my husband.''

"How delighted I am for you both!''

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